

and that we protect Medicare for the future in the way that we handle its premium structure. Premium support will be a great help to us, but those are the things that we need to hear about from our patients and our doctors. So I would like to urge everybody to talk with your doctors, to find out the stories, to find out what they want to tell you so that the patients and doctors can take that message home to their Members of Congress, to their Senators and to the President.

I thank you, Dr. FLEMING, for all you're doing to support a wonderful cause.

Mr. FLEMING. I thank the gentleman from New York, NAN HAYWORTH, for all of her contributions both here in Washington and certainly back home.

We've saved the best for last here. We have Dr. BENISHEK, the gentleman from Michigan, who actually managed the time for our last Special Order and did a great job. As I understand it, he is a wonderful surgeon.

So I would like to yield to the gentleman in the last few minutes that we have tonight.

Mr. BENISHEK. Thank you, Dr. FLEMING. I appreciate the opportunity to be here tonight to express my feelings about our cause to save Medicare.

I've been taking care of patients in northern Michigan, in a rural setting, for the last 30 years. It certainly means a lot to my patients to have Medicare there to help them get through their medical problems in their elder years. I am kind of surprised that I've been castigated for voting to end Medicare when, really, I voted to try to save Medicare because of the crisis that's coming forward due to the demographics of our country and the pending bankruptcy of the Medicare trust fund. As I see it, there are really four reasons that Medicare is in trouble.

Number one, there is an increasing number of patients on Medicare every year. There are 10,000 patients a day who are added to Medicare. There are approximately 50 million people today who receive Medicare. In 20 years, I think that number will be 80 million people. That's one reason.

The second reason is that there are a little over three persons paying into Medicare for every person receiving that benefit today; but in 20 years, there will be a little over two people paying. Not only are there going to be 30 percent more people, but there are going to be a third fewer people paying in.

The third problem, of course, is just the general rising costs of medicine. This is an issue where, in our plan to save Medicare, which is a premium support plan in which there are options in your insurance, I think it will help keep those costs down.

Of course, the fourth problem is the Affordable Care Act. The Medicare that people are familiar with today, that the seniors of today have, will not be the same Medicare going forward because the Affordable Care Act has

taken \$575 billion away from Medicare. That's over \$100 billion from hospitals; I think it's like \$40 billion from home health care, \$30 billion from hospice care, and over \$100 billion from Medicare Advantage.

□ 1950

Well, I know in my rural district, we have many small community hospitals that depend on their Medicare payments; and \$100 billion taken from each of those small hospitals—you know, those hospitals operate on a razor-thin profit margin. If we take that money away from the small hospital in my district, they may not be there tomorrow. So how would my senior population come see me? They wouldn't be able to come to their local hospital. They may have to go to Green Bay or Marquette or, you know, drive hundreds of miles to get evaluated in an emergency room, for example.

The way things are now is just not sustainable, especially with the Affordable Care Act's impact on Medicare. And to think that if we do nothing, everything will be okay is just wrong.

We've put forward this plan about premium support where you have a choice. It is similar to Medicare Advantage, where in Michigan there are 20 or 30 different plans you can choose from, the one that suits you the best. I think that's a reasonable option. There may be another plan out there somewhere that's equally as good. I haven't seen that. But I'm certainly willing to listen to a plan of how to fix it.

Doing nothing is unacceptable, and I just think that it's just wrong to castigate those of us who are trying to find an answer that will fit most people and be affordable and, like many of the advantages that people have talked to previously this evening, you know, different people's situations. But to do nothing, though, to put your head in the sand like an ostrich and pretend there's no problem is not an option.

So like the speakers before me, I encourage people to speak to their physicians about what the situation is. I'm going around my district in the next several months and am putting together a little Medicare meet-and-greet at the senior citizens' centers at various locales in my district to try to explain this to patients because they don't really seem to have an idea—I said patients; I guess I mean constituents. I was speaking in doctor terms—but they don't have an idea how serious the problem is. And I think part of our problem is getting that message out to other people that this is not something we can ignore, that this is not something that's just going to go away by not dealing with it. And it's certainly not going to go away by castigating people that are trying to find an answer.

So I encourage those people, as NAN mentioned, to speak to their physician. Feel free to call my office to get further information, but realize that we're trying to fix a problem, not ignore a problem.

With that, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. FLEMING. I thank the gentleman from Michigan, the physician.

In the closing moments here, what have we learned? We've learned that we have a Medicare system that's highly bureaucratic, highly expensive and, as the graph showed, is going to be insolvent as early as 2016. That's 4 years away. And we desperately need a solution to that. We've got this side of the aisle which has already come up with a solution, a premium support plan that basically offers to Americans the same opportunity we, in Congress, have, an excellent health care plan. And then we have got this side of the aisle, Democrats, who absolutely have come up with no solution. As the gentleman says, they bury their heads in the sand and offer nothing.

I would submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that we can't continue going this way. We have got to move forward. We've got to find solutions by, again, putting health care providers in the arena, having them compete with each other, always doing that. If it's a level playing field—and that's our responsibility in government—the quality of care goes up while the cost goes down.

I want to thank my colleagues here tonight. We have had a great discussion, and I look forward to doing this again very soon.

With that, I yield back the balance of my time.

MEDICARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. FALLONE) is recognized for 30 minutes.

Mr. FALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I wasn't planning on coming to the floor this evening; but when I heard my Republican colleagues' Special Order that was just completed, I couldn't help but come down because I think I have to correct the record on many of the statements that they made this evening about Medicare and their efforts with regard to Medicare.

First of all, I have to point out that when Medicare was first adopted in the House and in the Senate back in the sixties when President Johnson was in office, the Republicans overwhelmingly opposed it. They were opposed to Medicare. They voted against it. It would never have passed if it was for their votes. It only passed as a Democratic initiative. And over the years, Democrats have been the ones to protect Medicare.

Republicans have consistently opposed Medicare, tried to repeal it, tried to privatize it, voucherize it. And basically as a Republican Speaker once said—I was here at the time when Newt Gingrich became the Speaker back in the mid-nineties—he said that we want Medicare to wither on the vine. And that's basically what the Republican leadership has been doing consistently

in the 20-something years that I have been in Congress.

Certainly, if you look at the budget that was adopted by the Republicans last year, it does exactly that. The Republican budget would end the Medicare guarantee, replacing it with a voucher in 2022. And what that essentially means is that right now and under the Medicare program, when you get to be 65, you immediately become eligible for Medicare, which is a government program; and you are guaranteed that you have your health insurance through the government, through Medicare.

But if you establish a voucher, which is what the Republicans tried to do in their budget last year—fortunately, they didn't succeed—they would simply give you a voucher or a set amount of money for you to go out into the private sector and try to buy health insurance for that amount. And of course the amount that would be available wouldn't keep up with inflation. So even if you were able to buy health insurance when you were over 65 as a senior—which many people would not be able to—eventually you would not be able to; and you would simply have to pay more and more money out of pocket in order to buy the health insurance. In fact, we estimate that the Republican budget would double out-of-pocket costs by 2022 and cost an additional \$6,000 for each senior, and out-of-pocket costs would triple by 2030.

So what I want my constituents and everyone to understand is, the reason that Democrats started Medicare in the sixties under President Johnson was because people over 65 were not able to get health insurance privately. They weren't able to go out and buy health insurance because, basically, insurers didn't want to cover seniors. They had too many disabilities, too many times that they had to go to the hospital or see the doctor. So it was impossible to get health insurance if you were over 65.

And I would maintain that if you let the Republicans move forward with their voucher proposal, which they still talk about constantly—the chairman of the Budget Committee, Mr. RYAN, keeps talking about it—the same thing would happen again. Seniors simply wouldn't be able to buy health insurance with a voucher or without one. The cost of it would get so prohibitive. And the consequence is that Medicare would disappear, both as a guaranteed health insurance plan for seniors, and many seniors would simply not have health insurance at all.

The other thing that my colleagues tried to suggest tonight is that Medicare was going broke. They tried to convince you that Medicare is going broke. But if you believe that, then that sets the stage for the fact that you should either get rid of Medicare or voucherize Medicare because the notion is that somehow the government isn't going to continue with the program or can't afford the program; and,

therefore, we need to change it drastically. I would maintain that's simply not true.

□ 2000

Actually, right now there are 40 million seniors and 8 million people with disabilities below age 65 who have Medicare. Medicare is efficient, per capita spending at nearly half the per capita increase for comparable benefits provided by private insurers. And the fact of the matter is that the Medicare trust fund could certainly use some more money, but the way to deal with that is essentially to solve the economic crisis. In other words, as more people are employed, as unemployment goes down and the economy grows and more people pay into the Medicare trust fund, the Medicare trust fund would be just fine. The same thing goes for Social Security.

The problem with the trust funds, whether it be Medicare or Social Security, is that in a slow economy, in a recession, less and less people who are working pay into the trust funds. So the answer is not to get rid of the trust funds and not allow people to have a pension, which Social Security provides, or allow people to have Medicare and health insurance when they're over 65, but, rather, to grow the economy, reduce the unemployment, have more people pay into the trust funds, and they become financially solvent for a long time in the future. And that's what the Democrats have proposed.

Our answer to the Medicare program is to try to put more money into the trust fund, grow the economy, and keep Medicare as a Federal guarantee, as a Federal program that's guaranteed to all seniors.

Now, I also heard my Republican colleagues tonight talk about how the Affordable Care Act, that's the health care reform—some people call it ObamaCare—the health care reform, the Affordable Care Act, that somehow that was going to destroy Medicare. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The reality is that the Affordable Care Act strengthens Medicare. The only cuts in the Affordable Care Act are to providers. There are no cuts to beneficiaries. In fact, programs for beneficiaries and benefits for senior citizens are actually expanded under the Affordable Care Act, and many seniors have already seen that.

First of all, the hallmark of the Affordable Care Act, the health care reform, is prevention. And so what the Affordable Care Act says is that if you have some kind of health care, whether it's a mammogram or some kind of diagnostic test, you don't pay a copay. All prevention methods under the Affordable Care Act are provided without a copay. That's mammogram, testing for prostate cancer, any kind of diagnostic test or any kind of prevention program. And the reason for that is because we don't want people to go to the hospital. We don't want people to get

sick. We want them to be diagnosed at an early stage. And so we know that if people have to pay a copay, a lot of times they won't have the test done. So that's number one.

The other major benefit expansion under the Affordable Care Act or the health care reform is with regard to part D and prescription drug benefits. Many seniors know that when the Republicans passed Medicare part D, they left a huge, what we call, hole or doughnut hole so that when you pay out of pocket up to a certain amount, in other words, when you incur Medicare expenses up to a certain amount in the course of the year, it was \$2,000, now \$2,500, whatever the figure is, then everything that you incur beyond that is not covered, and then you have to go to a catastrophic level, something above \$5,000, to get your coverage again.

So many senior citizens, when they start the year, are getting their prescription drugs, but by August, September, or October, sometimes even earlier, they reached that threshold or doughnut hole and their Medicare prescription drugs were not covered under the original Medicare part D proposal.

So what the Democrats did in the Affordable Care Act, what the President did in the Affordable Care Act, or ObamaCare, if you will, was to gradually fill in that doughnut hole over the life of the program. So the first year, there was a \$250 rebate, and then prescription drugs in the doughnut hole were discounted 50 percent. And gradually, over the next few years, that doughnut hole will disappear so your prescription drugs will be completely covered and you won't have the doughnut hole.

Again, these are benefit expansions under the Affordable Care Act. So when the suggestion is made by the Republicans that somehow the Affordable Care Act is going to hurt or destroy Medicare, nothing could be further from the truth. The fact of the matter is that the Affordable Care Act strengthens Medicare, strengthens the benefit, expands benefits, whether it be for prescription drugs or diagnostic testing or prevention. It also provides a free wellness test every year where there is no copay. It actually pays money back into the trust fund.

So the life of the Medicare program, if you go along with what the Democrats are proposing, whether it is their proposals to improve the economy, grow the economy, would actually shore up the Medicare program, contrary to what some of my colleagues said here tonight.

You know, they mentioned different organizations. There was a group of doctors, they mentioned AARP. Most of the organizations, and I didn't listen to the whole hour, but most of the organizations that they mentioned, the American Medical Society, specialty doctor groups, the AARP, these are the groups that supported the Affordable Care Act, that supported the health

care reform, because they knew that it was strengthening Medicare and making Medicare more viable for the future and expanding benefits for seniors and the disabled that are covered by Medicare.

This is part of the historic nature of the Democrats and Medicare. We started Medicare. We strengthened Medicare. We have done everything we can to make Medicare more secure as a guaranteed Federal program. Republicans opposed Medicare from the beginning, continue to try to either repeal it, or, in the words of Speaker Gingrich, make it wither on the vine. And now in the latest proposal, the Republican budget here in the House of Representatives, my very Republican colleagues that spoke tonight all voted for the Republican budget that would essentially get rid of Medicare, make it into a voucher, not provide the Federal guarantee, and make it so the seniors were essentially thrown out with a voucher or a certain amount of money and had to go out and buy private health insurance, which they'll never find.

So I had to come to the floor tonight, Mr. Speaker, and really tell the truth about the parties and where they stand on Medicare. The fact of the matter is that the Democrats started the Medicare program and continue to make it viable.

I yield back the balance of my time.

IN RECOGNITION OF BLACK HISTORY MONTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. WEST) is recognized for 30 minutes.

Mr. WEST. Mr. Speaker, in commemoration of Black History Month, I rise to acknowledge the Republican Party's proud and storied history of standing up for the rights of African Americans.

The first black Members of Congress served during Reconstruction, and they were all Republicans. They won their seats, despite fierce threats of violence against black voters by groups like the Ku Klux Klan, and were successful only as a result of the firm support they received from the Republican Party.

One of these Members was Josiah T. Walls, a slave who earned his freedom through service to the Union in the Civil War. He settled in Alachua County, in our sunny State of Florida, and was repeatedly elected to Congress at large.

In some ways, Mr. Speaker, I carry the torch of Josiah Walls. You see, in 1876, the Democrats contested his election and had him replaced midterm with one of their own. No black Republican would again be elected from Florida to this House until November 2, 2010, when the voters of that State entrusted me to be their Representative.

On my desk in my office, there is a book called "Capitol Men," and it is a

biography of those first black Members of Congress. I stand where Josiah Walls and the other early black Republican Members of Congress once stood—Hiram Revels of Mississippi; Benjamin Turner of Alabama; Jefferson Long of Georgia; Robert DeLarge, Robert Brown Elliott, and Joseph Rainey, all of South Carolina. They were the ones who carried that first torch for my colleague, TIM SCOTT.

□ 2010

They would have stood here urging support for policies of equal opportunity for all. Mr. Speaker, I stand here this evening to recognize their legacy.

The Republican Party has always been the party of freedom. Today, we understand that our principles are best served when we act as stalwart advocates of free markets. But historically, Republicans understood that the value of every human life is diminished when any human life is made to work against its will.

Free markets are characterized by the free exchange of goods and services—and by the free exchange of labor for compensation. You see, Mr. Speaker, without free people, there can be no free markets.

Where men are not free, freedom does not reign. And so the Republicans have always been the party of free men, of individual freedom. It was President Abraham Lincoln, the father of the Grand Old Party, who signed the Emancipation Proclamation and brought about the freeing of the slaves. For many, this is the beginning and the end of the Republican Party's role in advancing equal rights. But that understanding misses the myriad ways our party went on to better the lives of Black Americans and cheapens the many contributions that later generations of Republicans made to the cause of freedom.

It was, in fact, Republicans of their day who worked to pass the 13th, the 14th, and the 15th Amendments, securing for African Americans deliverance from slavery, equal protection under the law, and the right to vote.

Each of these accomplishments did its part to cement the fundamental freedoms all Americans enjoy today. None of them could have gotten off the ground without GOP support. Take the 13th amendment, for example. At Abraham Lincoln's request, the Republican National Committee Chairman Edwin Morgan made abolishing slavery an official part of the party's platform in 1864. At that year's national convention, he opened with a statement on the topic. He said:

The party of which you, gentlemen, are the delegated and honored representatives, will fall far short of accomplishing its great mission unless among its other resolves it shall declare for such an amendment of the Constitution as will positively prohibit African slavery in the United States.

The 14th Amendment was no different. A little known fact about that

law that granted Black Americans citizenship, with all the rights and privileges thereof, is that every vote in favor was cast by a Republican and every vote against was cast by a Democrat.

In 1968, when the Democrat-controlled legislature of New Jersey voted to rescind its ratification of the 14th Amendment, it was the State's Republican Governor who vetoed that attempt.

Mr. Speaker, it was the Republican-controlled 39th Congress that established the Buffalo Soldiers, a fighting force of six regiments of Black American troops. They would soon become known for exhibiting the "courage of a cornered buffalo" in battle while posted to the frontier. In peacetime, they gained renown for being the finest horsemen the Army had to offer. And in 1907, the 10th Cavalry Regiment of Buffalo Soldiers was sent to the United States Military Academy at West Point to teach the cadets riding skills and mounted drill.

Mr. Speaker, think about that for a second: the commanders of their day were so confident in the ability of the Buffalo Soldiers that they entrusted them with the training of the next generation of Army leaders. And it was the Republicans who made that happen.

It was the Republicans who passed the 15th Amendment, as well. For once, the story is true that not every Republican supported it. A few abstained, saying the measure did not go far enough. It was the Democrats who voted against the 15th Amendment, and when it passed anyway, it was the Democrats who resorted to the use of poll taxes, literacy tests, intimidation and other pernicious practices in an effort to keep Black Americans from exercising their right to vote. This was something that my grandparents and my parents experienced growing up in south Georgia.

It was a Republican by the name of Senator Charles Sumner who got the equal rights movement on its feet. A fierce abolitionist and leader of the "Radical Republicans"—sounds very familiar when they start talking about Tea Party Republicans—Senator Sumner wrote and shepherded the first ever civil rights bill through Congress. It was a Republican President, the great General Ulysses S. Grant, who signed it into law the same day that it passed. And that comprehensive bill, the Civil Rights Act of 1875, would become the blueprint for every subsequent piece of civil rights legislation to come before Congress despite the fact that it was struck down by a backward-looking court.

It was the Republicans who first called for racial justice in the Armed Forces, not only allowing Black Americans to serve their country, but welcoming them to serve their country alongside their white brothers.

It was a Republican judge named Elbert Tuttle who time and again ruled in favor of civil rights and who went on